

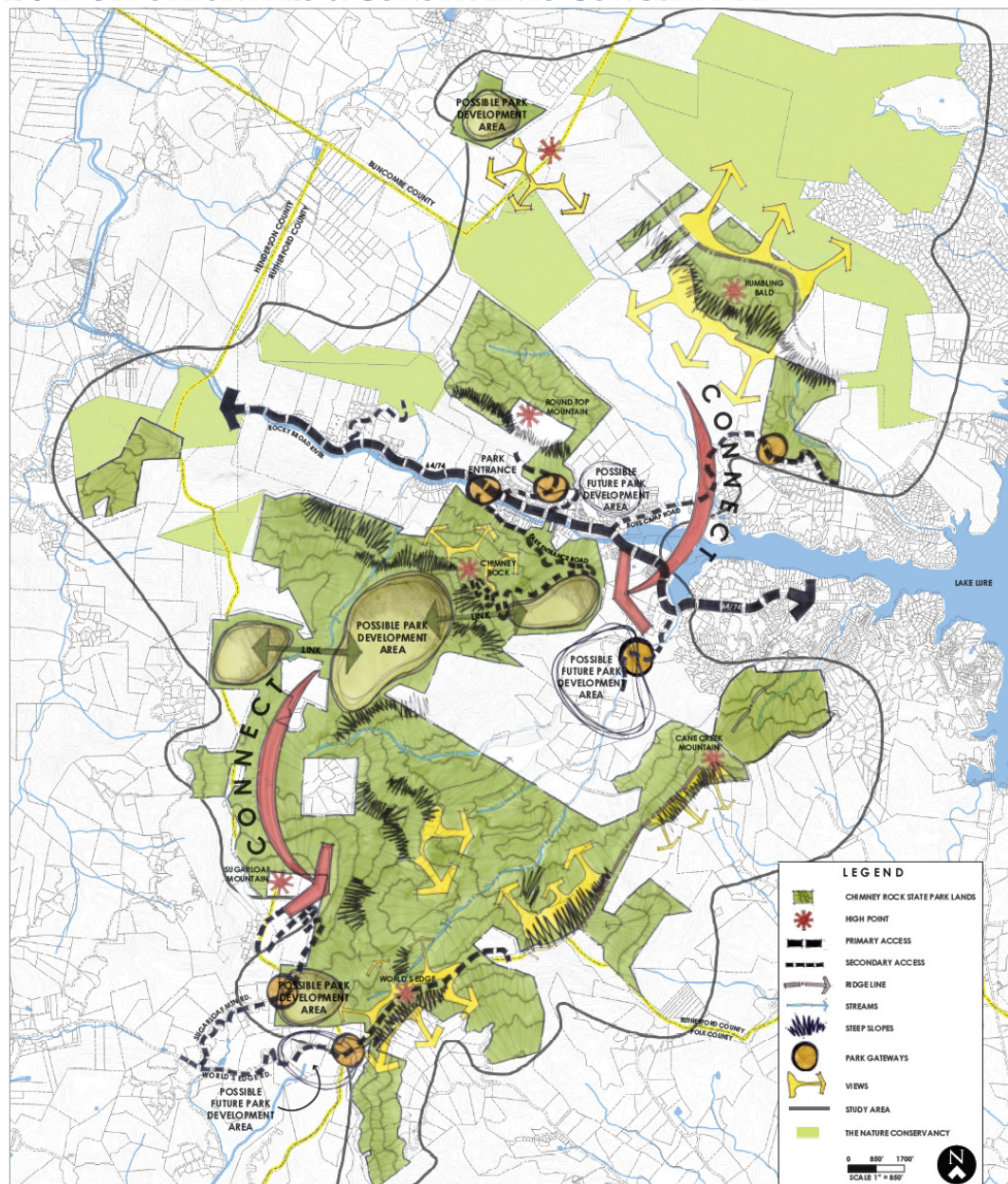


5 OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE PARK DEVELOPMENT

OVERVIEW

Chimney Rock State Park is already recognized as a premier natural destination in western North Carolina. The recent acquisition of additional parklands by the state creates an abundance of opportunities to conserve additional ecological regions within Hickory Nut Gorge as well as provide increased recreational opportunities for park visitors. Early in the planning process, a graphic study was prepared showing potential opportunities and constraints for development in the Chimney Rock State Park study area (Figure 5.1).

FIGURE 5.1: OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS CONCEPT MAP





GENERAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS AT CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

Chimney Rock State Park's distinct beauty and expanse of open space is due largely to its geomorphology. Steep rock cliffs, several large summits, and the varying terrain offer outstanding vistas and a broad spectrum of natural features for exploration. This range of site features provides the opportunity for future park users to design their own park experience. Existing roadways such as Boys Camp Road and World's Edge Road provide opportunities for park gateways and access points.

While opportunities are numerous, constraints must be considered as part of a thorough examination. Constraints affect implementation, feasibility of construction, park development and operation, and cost. The dramatic landscape of Chimney Rock State Park offers very limited areas for future park facility development. Among the 4,531 acres of parklands, less than 100 total acres are flat enough to accommodate park facilities. Steep topography and hydrology patterns restrict structures, roadways, and day use areas. Access is a substantial constraint to park circulation, operations, and connectivity. U.S. Route 64/74A, the Rocky Broad River, and the existing terrain are the main factors that limit connectivity between the north and south study area of the parklands. Travel times to the north and south of the park from central Chimney Rock along existing roadways can take up to 45 minutes. In addition, for all proposed facilities, a low impact development program will be necessary in order to maintain the ecology across the study area. The region has a valuable concentration of rare plant and animal species. The significant natural heritage areas that are present in the park today have the potential to thrive for generations, and the success of their protection presents constraints to park development areas. Adjacent private properties also constrain park expansion and future development. Landowner and resident privacy will need to be considered and respected when planning for public facilities and access. Park roadways and trails will need to be planned away from existing neighborhoods, homes and other private lands. Finally, steps will need to be taken to address the existing jeep trails and unpaved corridors in the park, which are considered unusable due to erosion and overuse. Rehabilitating these facilities will take time and introduce potential unanticipated costs during park development.

CENTRAL CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

Central Chimney Rock State Park includes the Attraction, Chimney Rock Mountain, Chimney Rock Village, Town of Lake Lure, and Bottomless Pools. There are several development opportunities in central Chimney Rock State Park. The park entrance road off U.S. Route 64/74A provides existing public access to the Attraction. At the Meadows, opportunities exist for an egress roadway as well as visitor facilities in the large flat open area. Proctor Road offers an additional access point off U.S. Route 64/74A, making an alternative entrance road a possibility.



The Meadows in the foreground, with Chimney Rock in the background.



A view of Lake Lure from the Opera Box at Chimney Rock; Rumbling Bald slopes upward, left of the lake.

Although views of Lake Lure and Chimney Rock Village are breathtaking, the landscape that surrounds them constrains any expansion opportunities in and around the Attraction. Steep rock cliffs and valleys limit any additional roadway connections to U.S. Route 64/74A. Stream patterns and Hickory Nut Falls are sensitive areas that also constrain development.



SOUTHERN CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

World's Edge and Cane Creek Mountain comprise southern Chimney Rock State Park and contain some of the park's most unique views of the southern gorge. This area is more remote and offers significant natural features not found in other parts of the park, such as large mountain streams and extended north/south ridgelines. Despite the remote location, two potential gateways would offer public access at World's Edge Road and Sugarloaf Mountain Road. South of Sugarloaf Mountain, a large flat area off Sugarloaf Mountain Road serves as an opportunity for future park development.

Public access to southern Chimney Rock State Park is available; however travel times to these roadways from the park entrance can take up to an hour. This extended trip time is a constraint for park operations and visitor access. There are no additional paved roadways within the park boundary, and existing jeep trails are considered unusable due to severe erosion problems. Several farms and homesteads are adjacent to park property, and all roadways, public facilities, and signage will require cooperation with private landowners. Therefore, this area lends itself to limited development opportunities within a remote landscape.



World's Edge



NORTHERN CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK

Northern Chimney Rock State Park includes Rumbling Bald Mountain, among other natural features. Northern Chimney Rock State Park has the potential for a backcountry visitor experience, and would be ideal for those seeking more solitude than is found in other areas of the park. Rare opportunities to view the north side of Rumbling Bald exist at Eagle Rock and Shumont Mountain. Boys Camp Road, a collector road off U.S. Route 64/74A, is an opportunity to provide access between the entrance road to the park and northern Chimney Rock State Park. Several possible park development areas south of Rumbling Bald and west near Shumont Mountain are flat and adjacent to existing roadways. Trail development in northern Chimney Rock State Park will be challenging, as the jeep trail along the ridgeline of Rumbling Bald Mountain is not feasible for a future hiking trail.



A view of Lake Lure from Rumbling Bald Mountain.



The Rocky Broad River and U.S. Route 64/74A bisect the northern park, creating a significant disconnect between the southern and central park. This is a constraint for potential park facilities in the southwest area near Round Top Mountain. The steep cliff faces and highly sensitive natural features limit park facility development. Access is limited to Boys Camp Road and Shumont Road, with travel times ranging between 30 to 60 minutes from the entrance to Chimney Rock State Park. Another constraint to future northern park facilities is the adjacent land use. Single-family lots and private property border the park boundary, and careful planning will be necessary to segregate private and public facilities. Signs of trespassing and unauthorized hiking, climbing and parking are evident near Eagle Rock and at the eastern, northern, and southern part of Rumbling Bald. Additionally, a substantial amount of erosion is occurring along several of the existing jeep trails, affecting access and recreation in this section of the park.

Constraint: Large sections of the existing jeep trail on Rumbling Bald Mountain are eroding.

